Psychiatrists Say Everything May Trigger Mental Illness

By ERVIN WATSON
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OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Car exhaust fumes gave a 45-year-old man the delusion he was Jesus Christ.

A favorite salad dressing brought on severe depression and drove a 35-year-old man to the brink of suicide.

Plain milk led a 40-year-old woman into a state of deep despair.

These are but three examples cited by two Oklahoma City psychiatrists who have set up an environmental control unit at a private hospital.

They believe that the air a patient breathes, the food he eats and all things he comes in contact with may trigger mental illness.

Even the material in the clothes a person wears or the lipstick a woman uses can produce reactions when a person is sensitive to them, the doctors said.

They say the evidence is so strong that they have set up a 20-bed hospital unit for treatment of such patients.

Dr. Harold G. Sleeper, president of the Oklahoma Foundation which governs Coyne Campbell Hospital, has been joined in the venture by Dr. William H. Philpott, a psychiatrist who came to Oklahoma City from Dana Point, Calif., where he has conducted research into such sensitivities.

Dr. Philpott said such innocent-appearing foods as cottage cheese can cause allergic-type reactions causing the brain to swell, producing a mental disorder.

He said 92 per cent of the 250 patients he has tested reacted to something. Tests on the remainder were inconclusive because the patients failed to cooperate, he said.

The psychiatrists said the Oklahoma City unit is the first in the United States of its type — devoted exclusively to psychiatric problems.

The causes of an allergy are unknown, they said, adding it might be factors like heredity, nutritional deficiencies or metabolic disorders.

They stress that the ecology-related illnesses are not likely to produce the solution to all mental health problems and say that conventional therapy, including drugs, will continue to be used.

"Only those patients who do not show improvement under conventional care will be selected for treatment in this unit," Dr. Sleeper said.

During treatment, the patient is separated from outside influences of the environment as much as possible, including from cigarette smoke, and all foods are withdrawn for four days. Only the cleanest, untreated water is the diet for the four-day fasting period.

Patients are usually addicted to favorite foods which are often the culprit, the doctors said.

At the end of this period, the system has been cleared, the patient is exposed to foods and chemicals one at a time and the patient's reaction is gauged.

A patient's reaction to some foods and chemicals may be monitored up to two years.

"This won't replace psychiatry," Dr. Philpott stressed, adding, "It will aid in treatment and the use of tranquilizers and shock therapy should be materially reduced. Conflicts and other problems must be dealt with in psychotherapy as before.

"In years to come, this treatment could become the primary treatment, though," he said.